

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: DOUGHILL BOG NHA

SITE CODE: 001948

Doughill Bog NHA consists primarily of upland blanket bog and is located approximately 5 km south-south-west of the village of Kilgarvan, on the western slopes of Knockbrack mountain, Co. Kerry. It lies within the townlands of Doughill, Lackaroe and Derrylahan. The site is bounded by fenced, townland boundaries to the north, east and south, by a stream to the north-west and by field systems to the south-west. It consists primarily of blanket bog habitat and includes both intact and cutover areas. Areas of heath and the headwaters of the Glashanamuck stream are also included within the site. Altitude range is between 250 m and 440 m and bedrock geology consists of Old Red Sandstone.

This site consists of an undulating plateau with occasional rock outcrops and is characterised by low hummocks and wet flats. The blanket bog vegetation is relatively uniform, dominated by expanses of Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) with Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) as associates. Bog moss (*Sphagnum* spp.) cover is patchy but in wetter areas *Sphagnum capillifolium*, *S. subnitens*, *S. papillosum*, *S. cuspidatum* and *S. tenellum* occur with almost full cover. Other mosses, liverworts and lichens that occur on the site include *Campylopus atrovirens*, *Racomitrium lanuginosum*, *Pleurozia purpurea* and *Cladonia uncialis*. The uncommon bog moss, *Sphagnum imbricatum*, occurs locally. The wetter areas tend to have more Hare's-tail Cottongrass, sometimes with patches of Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*). Wet lawns and hollows are dominated by *S. auriculatum* and White Beaked-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*).

Areas flushed ground or surface water movement support vegetation dominated by Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), Heath Rush (*Juncus squarrosus*), Compact Rush (*Juncus conglomeratus*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Purple Moor-grass, occasional Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*) and bog mosses *Sphagnum recurvum* and *S. cuspidatum*.

Blanket bog habitat grades into a mosaic of wet heath and rocky outcrops, dominated by Ling Heather, Purple Moor-grass and Crossed-leaved Heath, in areas with thinner peat soils. Clumps of Western Gorse (*Ulex gallii*) and short Ling Heather line the stream banks along the stream corridors, together with Soft Rush, Compact Rush, Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Tormentil and Carnation Sedge.

Landuse on the site is primarily agriculture. Activities associated with agriculture include grazing by sheep and burning of vegetation. There are many sheep tracks and overgrazed areas. Burning and overstocking has resulted in a predominance of Purple

Moor-grass. These activities have resulted in habitat change and damage to the hydrological condition of the site.

Doughill Bog NHA is a site of considerable conservation significance containing upland blanket bog. Blanket bog habitat is a globally scarce resource. It is largely confined to coastal regions at temperate latitudes with cool, wet, oceanic climates. North-west Europe contains some of the best-developed areas of blanket bog in the world. The most extensive areas are found in Ireland and Britain. Upland blanket bogs, due to their exposure to severe climatic conditions at high elevations, are particularly vulnerable to erosion by human activities and extensive areas are currently undergoing active erosion due mainly to overgrazing. The current area of intact upland blanket bog in Ireland represents only a fraction of the original resource, due to the combined impacts of afforestation and overgrazing, and intact examples are therefore extremely valuable for nature conservation. Their long-term survival requires sensitive management.